

Bull Island: A little time away.

by Joquita Burka

We were lured by the natural beauty of a place where red wolves, dolphins, bald eagles, alligators, egrets and heron live peacefully in a pristine environment. We'd had enough of man-made. So we headed to **Bull Island** as day visitors. Bull Island, we had heard, was *the* place to go to see unscathed barrier island life. The 65,000- acre **Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge**, up-coast from Charleston, encompasses Bull Island and dozens of other undeveloped barrier islands.

First, let's be realistic. Make sure you have comfortable shoes, sunscreen, water and, if you visit in the spring or summer, insect repellent. We had all of it—set to enjoy a

*...a beach without
a single footprint,
sandcastle or umbrella.
It was all ours!*

day in what must be one of the last places on earth given over entirely to nature.

We eagerly boarded the

Island Cat early on a Thursday morning on one of those days of warm sunshine and sky a color our family calls "S.C. blue" since we've never known skies that color anywhere else. It was a perfect day to head to the island. The boat's owner, Ann Goold, gave us a quick education on the area as we crossed the marsh creeks. I busily jotted down notes: The Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge is one of only two of America's Class One wilderness areas, meaning it is untouched and unaltered



by man. Bull Island is just one small part of this refuge, a seven-mile island, which provides support for abundant flora and fauna.

As I wrote, my family wisely chose to watch dolphins dive and re-surface again and again, pelicans dive-bomb toward unsuspecting fish and spartina grass wave against the boat's wake. These marshes and islands are home to hundreds of species of birds such as Oyster Catchers, American Wood Storks, Northern Harriers and Laughing Gulls (I was still taking notes.)

In a half-hour, we stood on Bull Island. The island offers over 16 miles of trails covering a range from inland marshes to a standing bleached hardwood forest known as Boneyard Beach. Some of the more obvious khaki-clad, camera-toting folks took off inland. I must confess however, that my kids and I headed swiftly beach-ward. Along our path, sleepy alligators sunned themselves in the marsh. Wood ducks drifted quietly. Herons rested among the grasses. It was a wonderful walk. But by walking fast, we managed to outpace the rest of the visitors and cross dunes to arrive at a

beach without a single footprint, sandcastle or umbrella. It was all ours!

In moments, the rest of the travelers came over the dunes. But with only 20 to 30 of us on the whole island, the feeling of glorious solitude remained. I dozed over a book as my normally bickering daughters strolled the beach, searching for seashells and loggerhead turtle tracks. No TV. No CDs. No Web. No loss.

In fact, the island was so relaxing that we finally had to sprint to the dock to catch the ferry. But apparently that's not unusual. The *Island Cat* has a schedule to keep, and it seems that folks who wander over the sands of Bull Island have a tendency to lose all track of time.

IF YOU GO...

Bull Island is accessible only by boat. You may take a ferry from Moore's Landing.

Coastal Expeditions Inc.

514-B Mill St., Mount Pleasant, S.C. 29464
843-881-4582



The marshes and grasses of Bull Island provide sanctuary for hundreds of birds, including the egret.